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Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01
DHA-02 ORM-02 /060 W
----------290927Z 018414 /20
P 290842Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1267
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 10244

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR KS JA
SUBJ: RELEASE OF JAPANESE PRISONERS IN ROK

REF: (A) STATE 311366, (B) TOKYO 18856

1. JAPANESE EMBASSY POLITICAL COUNSELOR MABUCHI AND MOFA NE ASIA DIVISION I (JAPAN) DIRECTOR YI TONG-X IK HAVE BOTH CONFIRMED TO US THAT THREE JAPANESE RELEASED WERE THE ONLY JAPANESE CITIZENS IN KOREAN JAILS, AND NONE NOW REMAIN.

2. MABUCHI TELLS US THREE HAD BEEN ARRESTED AT VARIOUS TIMES IN PAST TWO YEARS WHILE ON TOURIST TRIPS TO KOREA ON CHARGES OF SPYING AND ORGANIZING ON BEHALF DPRK. ALTHOUGH FACTS IN CASES WERE "VAGUE" ACCORDING MABUCHI ALL THREE WERE CONVICTED: ONE, GENTARO ITO, HAD IN FACT MADE SEVERAL TRIPS TO NORTH KOREA AND WAS FIRST GIVEN DEATH SENTENCE, LATER COMMUTED TO LIFE; OTHER TWO, SANJI SAWAMOTO AND SUSUMA NATSUYA HAD RECEIVED LIFE SENTENCES.

3. NO PUBLICITY (AT LEAST IN ROK) ATTENDED EITHER ARREST, TRIAL, OR EVENTUAL RELEASE: MABUCHI SAYS AFTER LONG DISCUSSION BETWEEN HIS EMBASSY AND ROKG OFFICIALS, RELEASE FINALLY SETTLED BETWEEN ROK CIA AGENTS IN TOKYO AND LDP DIET
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MEMBERS OF "KOREAN LOBBY", TAAKI KAZUO.

4. BOTH MABUCHI AND DIRECTOR YI ALSO CONFIRMED RELEASE WAS POLITICAL GESTURE. MABUCHI WENT FURTHER AND CHARACTER-IZED IT AS "POLITICAL CHRISTMAS PRESENT TO NEW FUKUDA GOVERNMENT" -- WHICH MABUCHI WRYLY COMMENTED WOULD IN ITSELF

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HAVE LITTLE BENEFICIAL EFFECT EXCEPT IN ROKG OFFICIALS' MINDS.
"THESE PEOPLE (KOREANS) ARE CRAZY," HE ADDED.

5. ALL REMAINING FORMER RESIDENTS OF JAPAN IN KOREAN PRISONS
AS RESULT PUSAN UNIVERSITY AND OTHER ESPIONAGE CASES ARE KOREAN
CITIZENS. MABUCHI SAYS THAT WITHOUT OFFICIAL COMMENT HIS
EMBASSY PASSES ROKG A REGULAR STREAM OF APPEALS FROM
JAPANESE FRIENDS OF THOSE IMPRISONED, BUT EMBASSY IS NOT
SANGUINE ABOUT POSSIBILITIES OF RELEASE. HE THINKS THERE
ARE CURRENTLY ABOUT 20 SUCH PERSONS IN KOREAN PRISONS.
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